

February 7, 1970

Mrs. Lola S. Lea  
Chairman, Committee on Medicine & Law  
Association of the Bar of the City of New York  
42 West 44 Street  
New York City

Dear Mrs. Lea,

It was kind of your committee to invite us to participate in the symposium on marijuana, and we enjoyed the session very much. I regret that our participation was limited to audition, since there many issues raised and some facts presented that were in error. The issue of marijuana is in the public eye, and the extensive penalties for possession are indeed absurd and disproportionate, and this was clearly stated by Dr. Mead and Mr. Rothwax. Unfortunately, both Mr. Haislip and Dr. Zinberg made misstatements of fact-- Mr. Haislip in regard to the studies of THC and the alleged toxicity of cannabis; and Dr. Zinberg in not distinctly separating the toxicity of opiates from cannabis.

While the problem of marijuana is acute, the problems of opiate dependence and their treatment are not only as acute, but the severity of the illness is so much greater, and the 'epidemic' so much more severe, as to be a public health problem of major magnitude. The legal issues of enforced engagement with methadone-- an experimental drug-- or the justification for incarceration without treatment may have been discussed, but seem to us still to be open issues. Perhaps your committee may be interested in discussing these problems at another occasion.

Again, my wife and I thank you for the invitation and your excellent hospitality.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry